



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 10, 2025

To: House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Support – HB1449 Public Health - Milk Products - Direct-to-Consumer Sale of Raw Milk for Human Consumption

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in favor of HB1449 Public Health - Milk Products - Direct-to-Consumer Sale of Raw Milk for Human Consumption. This proposed legislation would establish certain requirements for raw milk produced and sold directly to the consumer for human consumption in the State.

During the 2024 Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Convention in December, the voting members of the Maryland Farm Bureau made the decision to support the sale of raw milk to consumers, “We support the right for farms to produce and sell raw, unpasteurized milk for human consumption, with appropriate permits. ‘24”

The dairy industry in the United States has been undergoing a steady decline for decades, and the hardest hit are small and medium-sized farms. Once a thriving sector, the number of dairy farms has dwindled dramatically—from 5.2 million in 1935 to just about 648,000 in 1970 and to approximately 24,000 dairy farms in 2022 that sold milk. Currently in Maryland we have roughly 310 dairy farms remaining. Many small dairies are losing their contracts and left with no buyer for their milk. However, selling raw milk is a potential niche that connects the farm directly with good-paying, healthy consumers. Switching to raw milk may be a very rewarding fit for some farmers. Raw milk presents a unique farmstead product that brings all the added value back to the farmer with an incentive to work on quality. By selling directly to consumers, raw milk farmers are able to obtain greater financial rewards for their work.

In Maryland, dairy farmers under contract with milk cooperatives currently receive approximately \$25.20 per hundredweight when selling their milk. However, if a farmer were to sell raw milk directly to consumers at an estimated price of \$6 per gallon, this would equate to approximately \$73 per hundredweight. This comparison highlights a significant financial disparity: a dairy farmer could potentially earn nearly three times more per hundredweight by selling raw milk directly to consumers rather than through a milk cooperative. Growing consumer demand for locally sourced, unprocessed dairy products has prompted discussions about legislative changes that could open up new opportunities for farmers seeking more profitable alternatives to traditional co-op contracts.

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Please contact Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions